

# IN OUR BACKYARD

MAR 15 1991



AN UPDATE FROM THE ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER INC.

## The Answer in Black and White

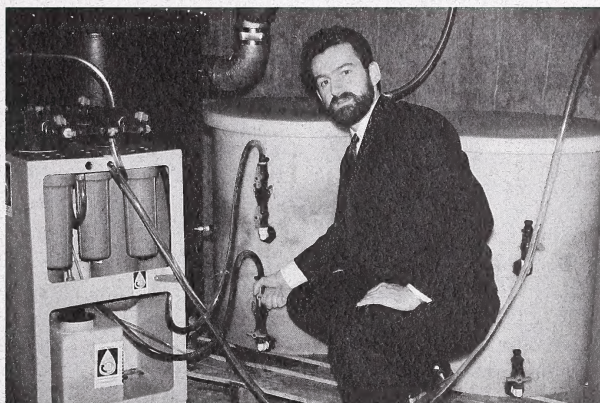
Picture this. Every year, an estimated 600 000 000 litres of used photographic fixer are dumped into North American drains and waterways.

Photographic fixer is a potentially hazardous solution composed of up to 50% ammonium thiosulphate, a chemical which can encourage algae growth and generate gases toxic to marine life. The same used fixer contains silver, a potentially toxic heavy metal, in levels as high as 12,000 parts per million.

This kind of dumping has been going on unchecked ever since the first photographer said, "Watch the birdie!" But the times, they are a-changing. Thanks to new environmental regulations and new chemical recovery techniques, used fixer is rapidly being transformed from a useless waste to a valuable resource.

### MADE IN ALBERTA

One such process, now being marketed worldwide, was originated in Alberta. Invented at the University of Alberta Department of Mining, Metallurgy and Engineering, it involves the addition of a chemical reagent to the used



Wayne Street of Technology Transfer Inc. preparing 50-gallon holding tanks of used fixer for recycling with the system in place at *The Edmonton Journal*.

fixer which removes the silver and other contaminants. This rejuvenates the solution so effectively that it can be re-used over and over again.

The effectiveness of the process was confirmed in May 1990 by the Alberta Research Council. It reported that the recycling operation was capable of rejuvenating photo-fixer used in medical and industrial X-ray, in graphics and printing, aerial photography, microfilm and generic black and white photography.

In September of last year, Technology Transfer Inc. (TTI), based in Edmonton, was

granted the exclusive license on the patent-pending process, trademarked as the CONTINU-FIX system.

The company markets the fixer recycling equipment to photo-fixer users, collects the dirty filters, and recovers silver from the deposited silver sludge.

### CLEAR SAVINGS

The recycled fixer is said to meet the same operating specifications as new fixer enabling users to save between

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Number 1

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Produced every two months by the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, "In Our Backyard" is intended to keep Albertans updated on issues and solutions in hazardous waste management. You can contribute to the process by "recycling" this newsletter. Pass it on to a friend with your comments. And, should you have suggestions you wish to share, pass them on to us. Our address, phone and fax number are on Page 4.



Alberta  
Special Waste  
Management  
Corporation

AN ALBERTA CROWN CORPORATION

This newsletter is printed  
on recycled paper.

*Continued on page 2*



# Getting the Facts is a Matter of Course

Just how reliable is our environmental information? Faced with a daily diet of doom and gloom, claims and counter-claims, the average Joe can be forgiven for being confused and overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of environmental issues. It's a situation that prompted the University of Alberta to offer an imaginative new extension course last fall — a course intended to separate the facts from the factions.

Entitled, "*Environmental Issues: What can we learn from Science?*" the course consists of seven related sessions in which the most current scientific information on seven urgent environmental issues is presented for discussion. The course is intended to help concerned lay people examine key issues objectively and reach conclusions based on sound information.

Response has been gratifying. When the Department of Extension decided to offer the course, it set a registration limit of fifty people — the maximum class size at which students would be able to interact with the coordinator. As things turned out, says course coordinator Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour, registration could easily have exceeded three times that number.

Contributing to the popularity of the course is the expertise of the session coordinators — all of them practicing scientists and researchers from the university and related institutions.

Dr. Gordon Rostoker gives a physicist's assessment of *The Greenhouse Effect*. Dr. Jim Butler, professor of Forest Science, examines the importance of *Trees and Our*

*Environment*. Dr. Harby Sandhu of Alberta Environment takes a down-to-earth look at the state of *The Ozone Layer*. Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour examines *Controversial Chemicals in the Environment*. The City of Edmonton's Dr. Kay Simpson looks at *Water Quality* while biologist Dr. Robert Rogers of Concordia College makes a similar examination of *Air Quality*. And to finalize the series, the university's Dr. Tee Guidoni looks at *The Effect of Environmental Chemicals on Our Bodies*.

The monthly sessions began in October and continue until April of this year, at which time the course will be reviewed for possible renewal next semester.

## CALGARY EXPLORES ALTERNATIVES

Similar courses are being offered in Calgary. Last year, the University of Calgary was first in the field with, "*Paper or Plastics: What are the Alternatives?*" It followed that over the winter with the

very successful, "*Our Common Future*" which started again in October and which continues to be well attended. Two other environment courses are being conducted. "*Flowing to the Future*" is designed to show that rivers are more than water. And with an eye to the Middle East crisis, the U of C is offering "*Energy Alternatives: For Fun and Profit*."

Calgary's Mount Royal College got the semester off to a practical start last October with a new Continuing Education course called "*Green Citizenship*" running on two

Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Green Citizenship demonstrates achievable alternatives in such areas as shopping and home-making, and explores the potential of personal recycling and green landscaping.

At SAIT, courses are more technical in nature, geared to serve the institution's mandate of meeting the needs of industry. The Department of Extension Services is offering a comprehensive 47-week program leading to a career as an Environmental Control and Safety Technician.

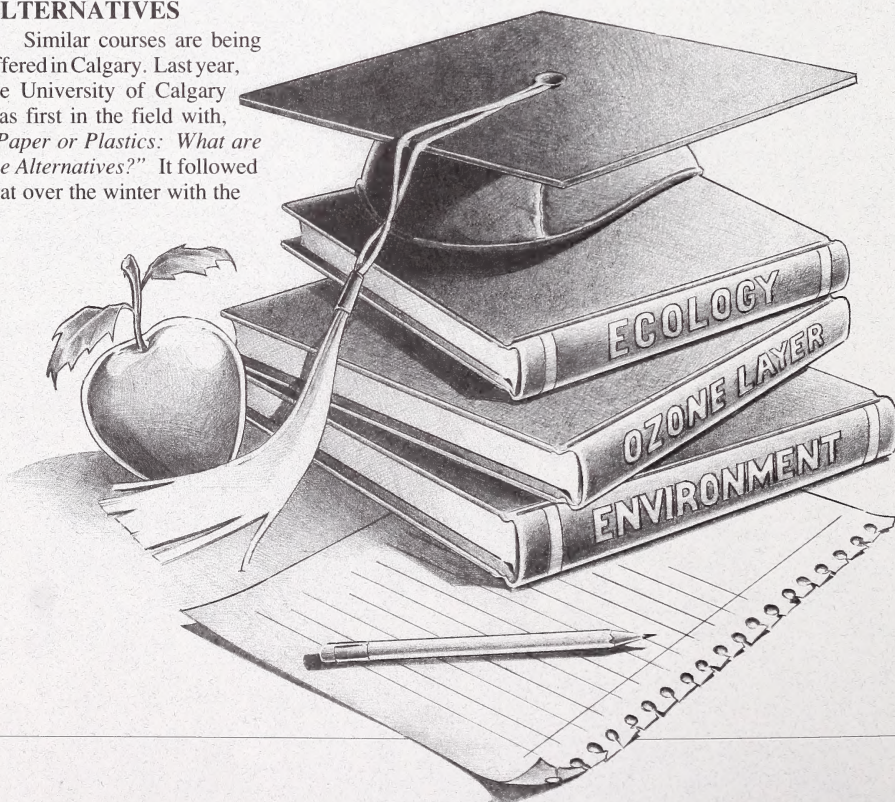
## THE ANSWERS IN BLACK AND WHITE

*Continued from front page*

40 and 70 percent on their fixer solution costs.

In December 1990, TTI instituted testing — again with the Alberta Research Council — to determine the effectiveness of the process in rejuvenating colour photographic fixer for re-use.

Meanwhile, the Continuum Fix black and white fixer recovery system has patents pending in 88 countries including Canada and the United States. As this issue goes to press, there are two systems in use aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Ranger serving in the Persian Gulf.





## TALK BACK SURVEY

# Not just another piece of paper ...

We need your help. Right now, we're evaluating "In Our Backyard" to ensure that it's doing its job effectively, and we're contemplating some changes. You can help us by returning this

postage-paid reader survey. Simply check off the appropriate boxes and add your personal comments. By doing so, you'll help ensure that "In Our Backyard" is something more than just another piece of paper.

1. Do you find "In Our Backyard" informative?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Readable?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Does the page design encourage you to read on?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How would you improve it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How do you/will you use the information gained from the newsletter? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What topics would you like to receive greater or lesser coverage?

• Specific waste treatment procedures ☐ More ☐ Less

• Recycling options ☐ More ☐ Less

• Alternatives to the use of hazardous materials ☐ More ☐ Less

• Local waste management programs in Alberta ☐ More ☐ Less

• National/International initiatives in waste management ☐ More ☐ Less

• Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. If you are involved in Special Waste Management, please specify what area (Check those which apply)

☐ Service Industry

☐ Technical

☐ Scientific

☐ Educational/Instructional

☐ Health Care

☐ Emergency Response & Safety

☐ Environmental

☐ Agricultural

☐ Policy-making

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you categorize yourself as a generator of special wastes?

☐ Industrial Generator

How many people are employed in your operation? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Small Business/Institutional Generator

How many people are employed in your business/institution? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Household Generator

How many people are there in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

8. This newsletter is part of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation's educational and informational program. Do you think such a program is:

☐ Necessary?

☐ Unnecessary?

☐ Adequate?

☐ Inadequate?

Please comment. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything you think should be added? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Continued on page 4



FROM \_\_\_\_\_



ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE  
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION  
610 - 10909 Jasper Ave.  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 9Z9

Fold Here Second

Fold Here First

### TALK BACK SURVEY...

*Continued from page 3*

9. What, in your opinion, are the most pressing special waste management problems facing Alberta:

In 1991? \_\_\_\_\_

Over the next decade? \_\_\_\_\_

10. How would you respond to these problems, given the opportunity?

11. For research purposes, please indicate:

Your age \_\_\_\_\_ Shared lifestyle \_\_\_\_\_ or Single \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children \_\_\_\_\_ City, small town or country dweller \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

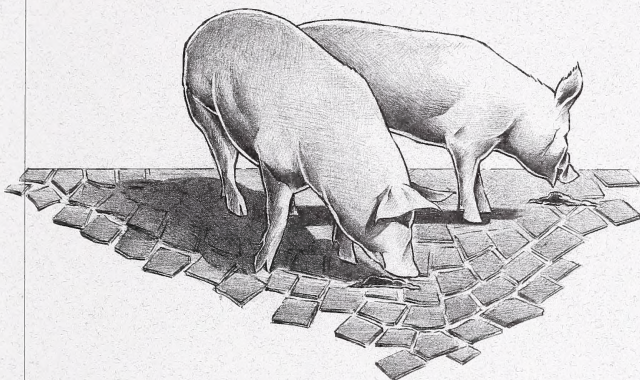
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about "In Our Backyard"? \_\_\_\_\_



## THOSE WERE THE DAYS ...

During the Middle Ages, waste disposal was left to the individual. Most people simply threw their garbage and slops out the door or window, sometimes on to unsuspecting pedestrians. Pigs roamed the streets gobbling anything edible. Because doctors thought bad odours caused disease, people carried handkerchiefs and fragrant herbs to protect themselves. And where efforts were made to carry refuse away, it was usually to just outside the city gates.

In 1388, the English Parliament banned waste disposal in public waterways and ditches. Despite the ban, waste management problems persisted for close to 500 years. That was when the Industrial Revolution brought about organized waste collection – and the wandering pigs gave way to the first road hogs.



## Update

### "IN OUR BACKYARD" TRAINING PROGRAM

The first round of "In Our Backyard" training seminars providing community group leaders with ASWMC's educational materials was concluded in January. The Corporation is now in the process of completing an evaluation, based on feedback from the people who have graduated from the training program and who are conducting "In Our Backyard" seminars. The evaluation is expected to be complete by summer.

If you would like information on this program, please call ASWMC at 1-800-272-8873 or 422-5029 in Edmonton.

### WHAT GOES UP...

In 1990, US researchers began looking for ways to reduce, reuse and recycle waste from the Skylab space station to avoid creating free floating waste in space. Trouble is, it costs about \$50,000 a pound to bring space waste back to earth.

## Hot News –

### FROM THE ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Formed in March 1988, the Alberta Special Waste Services Association is committed to the development of a strong waste management service industry in Alberta.

A non-profit organization representing the interests of private business in the overall waste management system, it works closely with waste generators and regulatory agencies to define and solve waste management problems.

Recently, the Association made a major improvement to its services with the installation of a SPECIAL WASTE HOTLINE intended to help businesses resolve their waste management concerns. The toll-free service puts businesses in touch with companies and institutions qualified to handle their particular needs.

One call gives the special waste generator access to some 110 member companies in Alberta, offering a wide range of expertise. Association members provide services in such areas as:

- ▲ laboratory analysis
  - ▲ emergency clean-up
  - ▲ consulting and project management
  - ▲ safety training
  - ▲ transportation
  - ▲ equipment and supplies
  - ▲ environmental liability insurance
- The Association is in daily communication with its members through a computerized fax service so that queries receive fast and detailed response. Small businesses are encouraged to call the toll-free number if they have a waste management requirement that they feel is not being met. In this way, the Association can discover what special services are needed and find ways of providing them.
- The SPECIAL WASTE HOTLINE receives financial assistance from the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.
- ▲ waste disposal
  - ▲ professional services
  - ▲ site remediation

### NEED EXPERT INFORMATION ON SPECIAL WASTE?

CALL:

**1-800-661-WASTE (in Alberta)**  
**403-424-6384 (outside Alberta)**



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if undeliverable return to:

ALBERTA SPECIAL WASTE  
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION  
610 - 10909 Jasper Ave.  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 9Z9

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4752  
Edmonton, Alta.

## Alternatives

It has been estimated that, in an average city of 100,000 residents, 3.40 tonnes of toilet bowl cleaner, 12.47 tonnes of liquid household cleaners, and 3.12 tonnes of motor oils are discharged into city drains each month. And that figure does not reflect the large quantities of toxic wastes "disposed of" by other, even less safe, methods.

House plant insecticide is one example of these other waste products. A typical insecticide may contain *methoprene*, *malathion*, *tetramethrin* and *carbaryl* – all hazardous ingredients. Yet potential dangers can be avoided by employing a simple alternative.

Product	Hazard	Recommended Disposal Method	Alternative
House plant insecticide	Toxic	Store safely until a toxic round-up is organized in your community.	Mixture of bar soap and water or old dishwater. Spray on leaves, then rinse.

## CALL DIRECT:

▲ For information on:

- Hazardous Waste Management Programs in Alberta
- Toxic Round-Ups
- Community Study Groups

ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE MANAGEMENT  
CORPORATION  
1-800-272-8873  
422-5029 (Edmonton)  
428-9627 (Fax)

▲ For information on the transportation of dangerous goods:

ALBERTA PUBLIC  
SAFETY SERVICES  
1-800-272-9600 (24 Hours)

▲ For a directory of waste management companies in Alberta:

ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE SERVICES  
ASSOCIATION  
1-800-282-6914  
424-6384 (Edmonton)  
Hot Line (for small businesses)  
1-800-661- Waste (9278)

▲ For information on:

- Recycling: Newspaper, Metals, Plastics, Clothing
- RECYCLING BRANCH,  
ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT  
427-5838 (Edmonton)  
297-5925 (Calgary)

▲ To report an environmental emergency or to register a complaint:

POLLUTION CONTROL  
DIVISION, ALBERTA  
ENVIRONMENT  
1-800-222-6514 (24 Hours)

▲ To access the clearing house that puts potential users of waste materials in contact with waste producers:

ALBERTA WASTE  
MATERIALS  
EXCHANGE  
450-5408 (Edmonton)

ALBERTA SPECIAL  
WASTE MANAGEMENT  
CORPORATION  
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